

What are Carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are molecules made of hydrogen, carbon and oxygen. They are often referred to as “carbs”. Carbohydrates are your body’s preferred energy source. They are broken down by the body in the form of sugar (glucose). Carbohydrates are primarily found in plant foods such as vegetables, fruits and grains.



Complex carbohydrates require digestion before energy is released and used by the body. Consuming complex carbs help regulate or stabilize blood glucose levels, promote weight stabilization/loss and are considered heart healthy. Complex carbs also have a higher fiber content which can help regulate appetite to keep you fuller longer.

Examples of Complex Carbohydrates:

- 100% Whole Grain Bread, Pasta, Tortillas and Rice
- Whole Grain Waffles (Kodiak Waffle/Pancake Mix, 100% Whole Grain Frozen Waffles)
- Quinoa
- Oatmeal
- Air Popped Popcorn
- Legumes (Ex. Black Beans, Chickpeas, Lentils)
- Vegetables (Ex. Corn, Peas, Squash, Sweet Potatoes)

Simple/Refined carbohydrates are composed of easy-to-digest, basic sugars. Some of these sugars are naturally occurring, such as in fruits and milk. Some simple carbohydrates are considered healthy, such as those found in fruit and low-fat/nonfat milk because they contain protein, calcium, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber, which can boost nutrition. Although they are healthy, they should be portion controlled. Other simple carbohydrates such as juice, soda, table sugar, etc. contain little fiber and no real nutritional value and can cause blood sugar spikes, cravings and weight gain. These types of foods should be avoided altogether or eaten very sparingly.

Examples of Simple Carbohydrates:

- White Bread, Pasta and Rice
- Chips, Pretzels and Crackers
- Fried Foods (French Fries, Chicken Nuggets with Breading, etc.)
- Pizza Crust
- Breakfast Cereals
- Cake, Cookies and Pie
- Pancakes, Waffles, Doughnuts, Baked Goods/Pastries
- Candy
- Fruit Snacks
- Sugar Sweetened Beverages (Soda, Juice, Kool-Aid, Sweet Tea, Flavored Milk)

Which Foods Contain Carbohydrates/How to Find Out?

If you consume packaged foods, a convenient way to figure out how much carbohydrate is in your food is to use the Nutrition Facts Label. The Nutrition Facts Label is found on the outside of the container. You will need to look for Total Carbohydrates and the amount will be listed in grams.

*Note: 15g of Carbohydrates = 1 Serving

How to Count Carbohydrates?

To count carbohydrates, you will need to look at three things:

1. Serving Size
2. Number of Servings per Container
3. Grams of Total Carbohydrate per serving

The total carbohydrate located on the label will tell how many grams of carbohydrate are in **ONE** serving. There can be more than one serving in the package, so if you eat more than one serving you will need to multiply the grams of carbohydrate accordingly.

Nutrition Label Example:

If you consume 2 cups of the product listed to the right you will need to multiply the total carbohydrate number (31g) by two.

$31 \times 2 = 62\text{g}$ TOTAL CARBOHRDRATES CONSUMED

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

How Many Carbohydrates Does Your Child Need?

The number of carbohydrates recommended differs based on your child's age. You can discuss this information with your child's Doctor and/or Registered Dietitian.

I Need ____ Carbohydrates Daily
or
____ Servings Per Day